



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
OFFICE OF POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

TESTIMONY PRESENTED TO THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

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Office of Policy and Management

Testimony Opposing House Bill No. 5171

An Act Prohibiting the Executive Branch from Making Rescissions or Other Reductions to the Education Cost Sharing Grant During the Fiscal Year

Senator Slossberg, Senator Boucher, Representative Fleishmann and distinguished members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill No. 5171, *An Act Prohibiting the Executive Branch from Making Rescissions or Other Reductions to the Education Cost Sharing Grant During the Fiscal Year*.

The Office of Policy and Management opposes this proposal.

The bill notwithstanding all statutes and special acts in prohibiting the Governor from reducing allotment requisitions and allotments in force for education equalization aid.

It is the Governor's obligation to maintain a balanced budget, just as it is a constitutional responsibility of the legislature to send the Governor a balanced budget. For this biennium, the legislature sent a budget that included legislative language requiring significant holdbacks that at the point of passage could only come from large programs, like ECS. This was known to legislators, who in voting for the bipartisan budget voted for lapses and holdbacks that could not be satisfied solely with reductions to state agencies and various non-profit grants.

Clearly the cuts made are difficult. Unfortunately, there are times when, given a budget's parameters, holdbacks and rescissions across the state budget are necessary in order to maintain a balanced budget. If you reduce the number of tools in the toolbox, as the bill does, then you put equally critical and essential programs at even greater risk of more severe rescissions and cuts. The legislature funds hundreds of state programs that are important to individual legislators and their communities and that benefit their local children. What may have been a relatively innocuous

cut for all, now becomes far more challenging to a few programs, with fewer options for savings available.

This has been an unusual fiscal year, with adoption of a biennial budget in the fall rather than the spring. There were months of uncertainty for state and local government, for all the programs they fund and for all employees. This bill seems to assume that this will be the case going forward, and in limiting options only makes the challenges worse – particularly since local governments do have tools remaining to make up reduced state funding.

For all the reasons set forth above, I oppose this bill, and I respectfully request that the committee does so too. Thank you.